

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 CIEP-01

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3016

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 3199

ROME FOR ILLING

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: CHURCH ON STATE

SUMMARY: PORTUGAL'S LEADING CHURCHMAN GAVE ME SOMBER VIEW OF
CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS. CARDINAL RIBEIRO SAID THAT UNLESS
THERE ARE PERSONNEL CHANGES IN AFM, CONTINUING ECONOMIC AND
POLITICAL DETERIORATION CAN LEAD TO CHURCH-STATE CONFRONTATION
AND EVEN CIVIL WAR. POPULAR LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN AFM IS WIDE-
SPREAD. SOME INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE MAY PROVE USEFUL IN STEM-
MING POLITICAL DETERIORATION. END SUMMARY.

1. DOM ANTONIO RIBEIRO, CARDINAL PATRIARCH OF LISBON AND
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LEADER OF CHURCH IN PORTUGAL, DURING CONVERSATION JUNE 5 DREW

BLEAK PICTURE OF WHERE PORTUGAL NOW IS AND WHERE COUNTRY IS
HEADING.

2. THE AFM--LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IS WIDESPREAD: THE CHURCH
HAS GIVEN UP ON PRIME MINISTER GONCALVES. GONCALVES IS NOT A
COMMUNIST, BUT IS BEING USED BY PCP. OTHER TOP AFM FIGURES
(ADMIRAL ROSA COUTINHO, GEN. OTELO SARIVA DE CARVALHO) DO NOT
INSPIRE CONFIDENCE. ADMIRAL PINHEIRO AZEVEDO IS PERHAPS BEST OF
LOT. AS FOR POPULAR MOOD, TRUST IN AFM HAS LARGELY DISAPPEARED.
BROAD CONFIDENCE AFM ENJOYED IN AFTERMATH APRIL 1974 REVOLUTION
HAS BEEN REPLACED BY DISILLUSION AS PROMISES GO UNFULFILLED AND
ECONOMY DETERIORATES. SPECIAL AFM PROMMOTIONS (AS OF GONCALVES
AND OTELO) DO NOT SERVE TO INCREASE PEOPLE'S CONFIDENCE.

3. PROGRESSIVE DETERIORATION: ECONOMIC FACTORS (INFLATION,
UNEMPLOYMENT) ARE ONLY PART OF PICTURE, ALBEIT AN IMPORTANT PART.
DISINTEGRATION OF ANGOLAN SITUATION IS BOUND TO HAVE POLITICAL
CONSEQUENCES IN PORTUGAL, INCLUDING THE RETURN OF LARGE NUMBERS OF
SETTLERS WITH AMPLE REASON TO FEEL ANGRY TOWARD GOVERNMENT.
BOTH MILITARY AND GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY IN COUNTRY ARE DIS-
APPEARING. SPIRIT OF OPTIMISM WITH WHICH REVOLUTION BEGAN HAS BEEN
REPLACED BY ONE OF GENERAL UNEASE.

4. ROLE OF PCP: WHILE MANY OF DIFFICULTIES ARISING IN PORTUGAL
ARE SPONTANEOUS AFFAIRS, THE COMMUNISTS HAVE A GENERAL STRATEGY
BY WHICH THEYSEEK TO PROFIT AND ENTRENCH THEMSELVES IN COUNTRY'S
KEY POWER CENTERS. WHILE PCP HAS BEEN CIRCUMSPECT IN REGARD TO
CHURCH, WISHING TO AVOID DIRECT CONFRONTATION, IT NEVERTHELESS
HAS PROVED AND HAS NOT SHIED AWAY FROM ATTACKING CHURCH
WHERE OTHER OF PARTY'S INTEREST ARE INVOLVED. FOR EXAMPLE,
IN BATTLE TO DEMONATE MASS MEDIA, PCP HAS NOT SPARED CHURCH-OWNED
RADIO RENASCENCA AND HAS ATTEMPTED SOERCE NON-COMMUNIST
STATION EMPLOYEES INTO CONFORMING WITH TAKEOVER ATTEMPT BY SMALL
MINORITY.

5. CHURCH -STATE CONFRONTATION LOOMS: CARDINAL SAID THAT GOP,
IS MOVING TO CONTROL CURRICULUM IN CHURCH-RUN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.
EFFORT TO ELIMINATE CHURCH'S ROLE IN SOCIAL WELFARE FIELD HAS
ALSO BEGUN, AS GOP HAS INFORMED CHURCH AUTHORITIES THAT IT CANNOT
CONTINUE FINANCIAL SUBSIDIES THAT HAVE SUPPORTED CHURCH'S HOMES
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FOR AGED, INDIGENT, CHILDREN OF WORKING PARENTS, ETC. IN CASE OF
RADIO RENASCENCA GOP APPOINTED "MIXED COMMISSION" TO RUN STATION,
HOPING THAT THIS ARRANGEMENT WOULD INDUCE CHURCH TO BACK AWAY FROM
ITS INITIAL POSITION. HOWEVER, CHURCH PREFERS TO HAVE GOVERNMENT
TAKE OVER STATION OUTRIGHT, RATHER THAN GIVE IN TO MORE SUBTLE
FORM OF DISPOSSESSION. HE CONCLUDED "WE ARE HEADING FOR A
CONFRONTATION WITH THE AFM"

6. CIVIL WAR IN VIEW? CARDINAL STATED EMPHATICALLY THAT "THE PEOPLE" WILL NOT TOLERATE IMPOSITION OF COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP; POPULAR FEELING IN "THE NORTH AND THE ISLANDS " (AZORES AND MADEIRA) IS VERY STRONG, EVEN THOUGH THERE STILL ARE SOME PEOPLE WHO DO NOT RECOGNIZE DANGER WHICH COMMUNISTS REPRESENT.

7. A ROLE FOR OUTSIDE PRESSURE: CARDINAL NOTED AFM'S SENSITIVITY TO FOREIGN CRITICISM, FEELING THAT SUCH PRESSURE COULD FAVORABLY AFFECT AFM REACTIONS IN SPECIFIC INSTANCES (AS BATTLE FOR CONTROL OF NEWSPAPER "REPUBLICA"). CARDINAL DID NOT SPECIFY WHAT FORMS WOULD HELP, BUT DID INDICATE ANY SUCH PRESSURE HAD TO BE VERY SUBTLE AND WELL HANDLED TO AVOID NEGATIVE REPERCUSSIONS.

8. CHURCH'S STRATEGY: CARDINAL RIBEIRO SAID THAT CHURCH MUST AVOID GETTING OUT IN FRONT IN BATTLING COMMUNIST LEST IT BE TAGGED AS "REACTIONARY"; WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT IS THAT IT AWAIT PROPER MOMENT BEFORE INTERVENING OPENLY. PUBLIC SENTIMENT, ACCORDING TO THE CARDINAL, HAS TURNED AGAINST AFM AND THIS TREND WILL DEEPEN AS POLITICAL/ECONOMIC SITUATION GETS WORSE.

9. COMMENT: CARDINAL RIBEIRO DOES NOT HAVE REPUTATION OF BEING ANTI-COMMUNIST HARD-LINER. HIS VIEWS, WHICH CONFIRM WHAT WE HAVE HEARD RECENTLY FROM OTHER SOURCES CONCERNING AFM'S LOSS OF STATURE, CARRY THE AUTHORITY OF A POLITICAL REALIST IN A STRATEGIC POSITION.
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